EVE

According to the Hebrew Bible and the story of the Divine Creation, Eve was the first human female. The Genesis account allows us to form an idea of the symbolism and character of the first woman on earth.

In Genesis 1:26-27 it is written: “Let us make a human in our own image, in our likeness … so, God created the human in the image of God. In God’s own image, male and female, did God create them.” This suggests that the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were of the same likeness, both in God’s image. This chapter reinforces the inherent duality of nature. In this initial stage of life, man and woman are of the same Divine source.

Eve is thus the Divine Feminine, what is in Hebrew called the Shechinah. This refers to the feminine aspect of God. Jewish mysticism recognizes the Shechinah as Mother Nature, the higher force present in human form. The Shechinah is the spirituality that is found in all the matriarchs throughout the Hebrew Bible.

In Genesis 2:21-22 it is said: “So God made the human fall into a deep trance, and while the human slept, took a part from its side and closed up the flesh again. From the human’s side God built a woman and brought her to the man.” Here the confusion begins, as this portion seems to contradict the statements of the first chapter, and has provided fuel to the idea that man is superior to woman.

Although it is understood that woman was physically formed from man, the Genesis account of creation stipulates that both man and woman were of one source, and both vital to each other. As it says “a suitable partner for the human being” (Gen 2:20) is only found in another human being. Eve was thus the completion of the creation of humanity, the feminine component of every living thing.

As the story progresses, the Hebrew Bible depicts Eve as a temptress. Once Adam and Eve are created and surrounded by all other living things in the Garden of Eden, they are informed by God of the one forbidden act: “But you must not eat from the Tree of Knowing Good and Evil; for the day you eat from it, you shall die.” (Gen 2:17) Eve later accepts the forbidden fruit and offers it to Adam.

The creation story suggests that Eve caused the Fall of Man. The Garden of Eden is depicted as a paradise of goodness and eternal life. Even though Adam accepted the fruit of his own volition, it was Eve who ate it first. The death that God promised becomes the banishment of humanity into the world outside Eden of good, evil and mortality. Adam and Eve were no longer privy to the Divine Tree Of Life.

Eve symbolises free will, in making the first human decision recorded in the Bible. In choosing to eat from the Tree of Knowing Good and Evil, she thus chooses knowledge over obedience. Instead of death, Eve was granted the title of “mother of all who live” (Gen 3:20) She signifies the independence of human beings.

In Judaism, it is said that by accepting the forbidden fruit, Eve initiated the relationship between humanity and what the serpent symbolizes. Once God saw what Eve had done He said: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers.” (Gen 3:15) The serpent is said to represent the characteristics of the physical world. Eve’s wrongdoing caused an eternal conflict between humanity and the world outside Eden.

God named the first woman Eve, meaning ‘life-giver’, after she had sinned with Adam. He swore that forever more “pain increasing, groans that spread into groans, having children will be labour.” (Gen 3:16) Eve has been blamed for robbing humanity of the pain-free, idyllic life in the Garden of Eden which was God’s initial prescription. However, her strength and force of will proclaim her eternal status as the instigator of human consciousness and independence.

Eve is a symbol in the Hebrew Bible of the ability to think for one’s self. In Judaism, she is depicted as the beginning of humanity, the mother of all mothers, an eternal example of humanity’s search for meaning, and its price in mortality.

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